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THE DUTY

OF

OBEDIENCE TO THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

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THREE SERMONS

PREACHED IN

THE CHAPEL OF BROWN UNIVERSITY.

BY

FRANCIS WAYLAND,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

BOSTON:
CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

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SERMON I.

MATTHEW XXII. 21.

RENDER THEREFORE UNTO CESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CESAR'S, AND UNTO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S.

This sentence was spoken by our Lord, in reply to a question of casuistry presented for his decision by the Pharisees and Herodians of Jerusalem. It teaches us, that a disciple of Christ is under a moral obligation to obey the civil authority, but that there are limitations within which that obligation is restricted. I propose to ascertain the meaning of the passage, and then to derive from it such instructions as may be appropriate to the condition of a Christian citizen at the present day.

At the time when the conversation was held, of which the text forms a part, Judea was a Roman province. Its king was an Idumean, who held his authority under the Emperor Tiberius. Every important city through the Holy Land was garrisoned by Roman soldiery. The common currency of the nation was Roman coin. The law which transcended every other law, and to which every citizen had the right to appeal, was Roman law. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was worshipped only by sufferance. Everything bore testimony to the fact, that the independence of the kingdom of David had passed away, and that Judea lay prostrate at the feet of the mistress of the world.

It was under these circumstances that the Pharisees and Herodians, waiving for the present their differences of opinion,

agreed upon a question to be submitted to our Lord, for the sake of entangling him in his talk. They were unable to conceive how he could possibly answer it, without embroiling himself either with the people or the government. "Master," said they, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar, or not?"

The question thus artfully proposed was intended, I presume, to suggest some such considerations as the following: This land was given to Abraham and to us his posterity for an everlasting possession. The family of David was selected by the Most High to be our hereditary rulers. We are the worshippers of the true God, while all other nations are senseless idolaters. The payment of tribute is an acknowledgment of submission to an authority which we believe to be usurped. By doing it we profess to receive as magistrate and reverence as sovereign, a man who has never been appointed by God to govern us; nay, more, we acknowledge the right of unclean idolaters to bear rule over the chosen worshippers of Jehovah. Coming to Jesus, — as a teacher sent from God, a personage incapable of being swayed by the fear of man, who in a matter of right would look unawed upon the whole power of the Roman empire, — they ask him what, under these circumstances, they shall do. Can persons of as tender consciences as we, say they, pay this tribute without sin? or, must we refuse, and bring upon ourselves all the consequences of resistance to the civil authority?

This was not the first, nor has it been the last time in which the rights of conscience have been pleaded as an excuse for deliberate wickedness. All this our Lord knew perfectly well. The question, however, in itself was one of grave importance. Our Lord proceeded to answer it just as though the motive which prompted it had been ever so innocent. He, in very few words, announces the rule by which his disciples in all ages should be directed in their relations to the civil government. Let us proceed to examine this rule.

Show me a penny, said he. Whose image and superscription

hath it? That is, whom doth this piece of money testify to be the actual sovereign of this country. They say unto him Cesar's. They thus acknowledge that their actual sovereign is Cesar. Render, therefore, said he, unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's; and, unto God, the things that are God's. Cesar, you perceive, is here put for the chief magistrate of the nation, the organ of civil government, the agent of civil society. The precept of our Lord then is, render to the civil government whatever is due to the civil government, and, to God, whatever is due to God. And you will observe that, in this connection, the precept to render unto God the things that are God's, is not absolute, but relative. It is not the simple command to worship, revere and love our Father who is in heaven. It has special reference to the case in which there may seem to arise a collision between these two duties. Whenever such a case occurs, we, as beings responsible for all our acts to God, are bound deliberately to consider it. We are to determine precisely what belongs to the civil government and then, as citizens and as Christians we are under moral obligation to render it. But, then, in this, as in every other case, we are bound to consider also what belongs unto God. Nothing must either tempt or affright us from obedience to him. His claim over us transcends that of the civil magistrate. We ought to obey God, rather than man. And we may be confident, that, in obeying him, we shall never violate any duty which we owe to the magistracy, for if the magistracy command us to disobey God, it has transcended its proper powers, its commands are of no authority, and a Christian may not obey them.

There can be no doubt, however, that our Lord intended to direct them to pay the tribute money. He knew that they would be called upon for it, and he offers no reason why they should not pay it. But he goes farther. Show me said he the *tribute money.* Whose image and superscription *hath it?* They say unto him Cesar's. Holding it up before them, or pointing to it, as I presume he did, he replies, render unto Cesar Cesar's things. That is to say, this tribute money, on which his image is engraved and his name is written, be-

longs to Cesar, and to him let it be paid. Now, this decision, if I mistake not, throws some light upon another question which in this connection is very likely to be raised. It teaches us that Christianity has nothing to do with the *forms* of human government. The people were at this time living under an absolute monarchy. The reigning sovereign, was a tyrant of atrocious wickedness. And yet our Lord directs that the government be respected and the tribute paid. He neither inquires into the title of Tiberius to the throne of the empire, nor the right of the empire to rule over Judea. He simply asks whose is this image and superscription, that is, what is the government actually established ; and he commands them to render to that government its due. I do not say that Christianity forbids us to entertain preferences in regard to the forms of government. I do not say that Christianity does not create a tendency to free institutions. I firmly believe that it does. Teaching universal equality of right, it could not do otherwise. All the true freedom on earth springs essentially from the Gospel. It is intended, however, to improve the condition of civil society, not by revolution and bloodshed, but by instilling into our bosoms a spirit of piety towards God, and of justice and mercy towards men. While Christianity is doing this, it is rendering good government necessary, and bad government impracticable. In the mean time it treats every existing government in obedience to the precept given in the text. The civil authority is established. The image is stamped and the superscription is engraved. The evidence of the actual existence of this authority is in the hands of every man. Its precept then is, render to society as represented by the magistracy of its choice, whatever society can rightfully claim. Such I understand to be the teaching of Jesus Christ.

This is however only a part of our Saviour's precept. The remainder is at least equally important. "Render unto God the things that are God's." That is, Cesar may claim things which belong to God, and these must never be rendered to Cesar. While the Lord expressly teaches the duty of obedience to the civil magistrate, he forewarns his disciples that

cases may arise in which such obedience would be treason against God. "Thus" saith he, "they will deliver you up to the councils, and will scourge you in the synagogues, and you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a *testimony against them* and the gentiles. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops. And fear not them that kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And the manner in which the apostles understood this commandment of our Lord, we may learn very clearly from their conduct immediately after his resurrection. When Peter and John were forbidden by the Sanhedrim to speak at all or to teach in the name of Jesus, they answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And when they were discharged from arrest, the burden of their prayer was; "And, now, Lord behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." A few days afterwards they were again arrested, and the High Priest asked them saying, "did we not strictly command you, that ye should not teach in this name, and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."* To this accusation, the noble reply of the apostle was merely this, "We ought to obey God rather than men;" and he forthwith began to preach to the high priest himself the same gospel which he had been forbidden to preach among the people.

Here, then, the disciple of Christ seems to be furnished with two apparently opposite rules of conduct. By the first he is commanded to obey the civil magistrate, without asking many of the questions which men are commonly disposed to ask on this subject. By the second, he is commanded to pay no respect to the civil magistrate whatever; but to act

* They had arraigned the civil magistrate before the bar of Eternal Justice. Him ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.

just as he would if such a magistracy did not exist. How then are we to harmonize these two apparently conflicting precepts? When are we to obey, and when are we to disobey?

This seeming contradiction can only be explained by supposing that the authority of society and of government which is its agent, is a limited authority. This is intimated in the words of the text, render unto Cesar the things *which are Cesar's;* that is, there are certain things which are not Cesar's, and to which he can claim no right. The authority of the magistracy is conferred for definite and specified objects, and it must accomplish these objects by innocent means. So long as it confines itself to its appropriate objects, and seeks to accomplish them by innocent means, Jesus Christ commands us to yield to it implicit obedience. When, on the other hand, it undertakes to accomplish objects for which no authority has been conferred upon it, or attempts to accomplish them by means which Christ has forbidden, the gospel imposes upon us no obligation to obey it, nay, it may command us to disobey it.

This distinction renders it necessary for us to inquire what are the legitimate objects for the accomplishment of which civil government is established. To this question let us briefly direct our attention.

The great object for which civil government is established among men, I suppose to be, to protect every man in the enjoyment of those rights which have been conferred upon him by his Creator.

Every man is conscious that he is an independent moral agent, responsible to God for the use of the powers with which he is endowed, and at liberty, so far as man is concerned, to use them as he will, provided he do not interfere with the correspondent rights of his neighbor. The muscles, the sinews, the senses, the whole body of a man, are his own; and, provided he use them without injury to another, he may use them as he will. He has a perfect right to the natural results arising from the labor of his body, in what manner soever that labor may have been employed. His mind is his own. He may acquire

with it such knowledge as he chooses, and, under the limitation above suggested, may disseminate that knowledge as he pleases among his fellow-men. He has a right to obey with perfect freedom the dictates of his conscience, that is, to worship God in such manner as he pleases, or not to worship him at all. The worshipping or the not worshipping cannot come under the cognizance of the civil magistrate, so long as the man refrains from infringement upon the rights of his neighbor.

But, it is found, that men are not naturally disposed to obey these obvious dictates of justice. Every man is more or less disposed to appropriate to himself the property or labor of another, to restrict him in the use of his mind, or to control the exercise of his conscience. As the indulgence of these dispositions would lead to universal war, society is ordained by God to prevent it. Its object is to oblige every man to use the means of happiness which God has conferred upon him, in such a manner that he shall not interfere with any of the correspondent means of happiness which God has conferred upon his neighbor. Though every man might be willing to encroach upon the rights of his brother, no man is willing himself to suffer encroachment, nor is he willing to tolerate encroachment in another. Hence, men instinctively unite in societies for the purpose of mutual restraint. They naturally place themselves under the protection of society that thus the rights of the individual may be guaranteed to him by the combined power of the whole. Every man turns to society as the umpire whenever he believes that his rights have been invaded by his neighbor. Society, on the other hand, assumes the office, pronounces the award, and pledges its whole power to carry it into execution.

It is for the accomplishment of these purposes that the various forms of the civil magistracy are ordained. The Legislature enacts the laws ; that is, it declares what are the rights of the individual and what shall be the penalty if they be violated. The Judiciary ascertains whether or not a law has been violated, and pronounces the sentence which the law has affixed to the transgression. The Executive carries into effect the decision of the Judiciary. Here the great function of civil society ends. This is, I think, the view of the subject entertained by

the authors of the Declaration of Independence. "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to *secure these rights governments are instituted among men.*" Such then is the paramount object for which the magistracy is appointed of God.

I have said that civil society assumes the responsibility of protecting the rights of the individual. Having assumed this duty, it is under obligation to discharge it. If it cannot be discharged without the use of force, it is authorized to use force to the extent which the obligation that it has assumed renders necessary. In order to prevent wrong, it has a right to summon to its aid the assistance of every citizen, and he is bound to render it. Every individual is a member of that society which has promised to secure to his brother the enjoyment of those rights bestowed upon him by his Creator; and that promise every man is under moral obligation to redeem.

In all this, I think I have but enforced the doctrine of the apostle Paul, in the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power; do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

But we may carry this principle a single step further. I have shown that it is the duty of the society to protect the individual against injury from another member of the same society. But suppose that he is exposed to injury from a member of another society, is he not entitled to the same protection? It seems to me that he is; and that the society to which he belongs is bound to protect him, whether he be assailed by one

or by many. It is the duty of the society to which he belongs to restrain *him* from inflicting injury upon all *other men*, and to prevent *all other men* from inflicting injury *upon him*. Here, however, it is to be remarked, that the use of force can only be justified when employed for the prevention of injury, when directed towards the injurious person alone, and when employed to no greater extent than the accomplishment of the purpose renders necessary.

But besides this, the great object for which civil government is established, there are various other objects which, for the sake of convenience, are, by common consent, committed to its care. Thus, for instance, it is found that common education can be much more successfully conducted by public than by private effort. The care of highways, of harbors, and many of the most important aids to civilization, are most properly left to the same agency. Every man receives the benefit of such arrangements, and hence every man may properly be obliged to bear his portion of the burden.

The cost of conducting all these departments of government must be defrayed by taxes, or some other form of imposition. Our share of this cost belongs properly to Cesar, and a Christian is bound, by the principles not only of common honesty, but also of his religion, to render it even to the uttermost farthing. The blessings of a good government are absolutely incalculable. Shall any man ask to be a partaker in these blessings, and be unwilling to pay his portion of that expense, by which they are procured? Can that man be honest, who would send his children to a public school, and refuse to pay his proportion of the tax for the support of education? Can he be a disciple of Christ who shrinks from bearing his part of the cost of repairing a road which he uses in common with his neighbors, or of lighting a public lamp, of which he enjoys with them an equal and common benefit?

The apostolic precept on this subject is clear and explicit. "For this cause," (that is, for conscience' sake,) "pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues;

tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

The precept of our Lord, however, goes further than this, and teaches us that a Christian is not to limit his public service to the strict line of equity, but is to go further, and set an example of enlarged public spirit. It encourages us to do more than can rightfully be demanded of us, so that we may by example cultivate a spirit of disinterested zeal for the general good. The precept of Jesus Christ is this: "If a man compel thee to go with him one mile, go with him two." The words here spoken allude to compulsory public service. In the time of our Lord, the public despatches were carried by officers of government, who had the power to compel any citizen to leave his occupation and forward them on their journey. The teaching of our Lord would then be something like the following: The public service can be done only by the assistance of every citizen in his turn. In all such cases do your own part willingly. But be not content with this. Be ready and willing at all times to do more than can in strictness be required of you. You thus set an example of voluntarily doing good to the public. To cultivate this spirit is to lay deeply and securely the foundation of all public improvement. You will thus render it evident that you act, not for yourselves, but for others; and men seeing your good works will glorify your Father who is in heaven.

You all see how widely extended is the application and how ennobling is the practice of this precept. Let me suggest a few cases by way of exemplification. I frequently hear Christians as well as other men excusing themselves from serving as jurors, on account of the irksomeness of the duty, or the pressure of their private avocations. This is a violation of the precept of the text. The duty belongs unto Cesar, and to Cesar must it be rendered. We must bear our portion of this service, or we disobey Christ. If we refuse to perform it, we are guilty of injustice to our fellow-men. If our property or character is at stake, we expect them to do their part in protecting us from wrong. They have a right to claim

that we shall perform the same service for them. It is an act of very stupid selfishness, to leave the most important judicial duty in the hands of men whose time is utterly valueless.

For the same reason I think that every Christian citizen, is under obligation to vote in every case where a public officer is to be chosen. The happiness and virtue of the community no less than the security of property depends greatly on the character of the magistracy. If I am injured in person or property by a wicked public officer, I have a right to complain of my fellow-citizens who gave him authority over me, or, who, when it was in their power, did not prevent his election. A Christian in this country, above all others, has a duty to perform in this matter, and he disobeys the commandment in the text if he does not perform it.

The same principles teach us, that there can be nothing more diametrically at variance with the precepts of the gospel than any attempt to defraud the revenue. He who does this knowingly and wickedly, disobeys the precept, render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's. He withholds from the public what belongs to the public. He receives the full benefit of protection and refuses to pay his share of what that protection costs. Nay, he is guilty of a double injustice. He realizes to himself an exorbitant profit, the wages of unrighteousness, while he is able to undersell, and, it may be, ruin his honest neighbor, who, in an upright public spirit, is obeying the law of Christ. I need scarcely add that overcharging the public, the waste of public property, and all the modes by which the Post Office is defrauded of its due, come under the same condemnation.

I have thus endeavored to show what are the legitimate objects of civil government, and what are the duties which the ordaining of this government imposes upon a disciple of Christ. It is proper, however, that I remark, before closing this part of the subject, that a government, in carrying forward these objects, is ever amenable like an individual to the law of right. The goodness of the end will never justify wickedness in the means. Societies as much as individuals

are bound to yield obedience to the commands of God. It is only when the objects of a government are right, and the means by which they are accomplished are innocent, that it can demand, on the principles of the gospel, the aid and co-operation of the disciple of Christ. Acting in obedience to these principles the magistracy may claim the obedience of the Christian citizen, not from fear, but for conscience' sake, and from the love which he bears to the Savior, who loved him and gave himself for him.

SERMON II.

MATTHEW XXII. 21.

RENDER THEREFORE UNTO CESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CESAR'S, AND UNTO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S.

In the preceding discourse I have endeavored to show, that every disciple of Christ is under imperative obligations to obey the civil magistrate, so long as the civil magistrate obeys the social and moral laws by virtue of which his office has been created. While the magistracy employs itself in the administration of justice, in the protection of innocence, and the punishment of crime, and in the discharge of those duties, which, ort he sake of convenience, the public has voluntarily confided to it, Christ commands us not merely to yield it our obedience, but to proffer to it our cheerful and disinterested support. We may not too closely scrutinize the extent of our obligation for the selfish purpose of ascertaining how little we may do and yet escape censure. We are to look upon civil society as one of our greatest sublunary blessings, and we must cherish, and succor and sustain it, not from wrath, (the fear of wrath,) but for conscience' sake; not because physical force would, if necessary, compel us, but because we thus most effectually subserve the interests of good order and happiness, of virtue and religion.

So much as this then the gospel commands, in respect to our obedience to civil government. Beyond this I know not that it utters any command whatever. The acts, therefore, the laws, the requirements of civil society, like the

acts, the laws, the requirements of the church, or of any other society, are amenable to the tribunal of reason and conscience and the Word of God. The Christian is at liberty to inquire whether any act of the government transgresses the limit within which its action is, by reason and revelation, restricted; and yet more to determine concerning every one of its actions whether it be right or wrong. At liberty, did I say? He is more than at liberty, he is obliged thus to inquire and to determine. He is a party to every act of the society of which he is a member. He is an intelligent moral agent, responsible to God for his actions, whether they be personal or associated, and therefore he must think about civil government and act about it, according to the light which God has given him, all things else to the contrary notwithstanding.

I therefore, as a Christian citizen, look upon the civil government and the civil magistracy with as unblenching an eye as I look upon anything else. In simplicity and godly sincerity, not in the spirit of strife or partisanship, I may pronounce my opinion upon its enactments and measures, just as I would express my opinions in any other case. I see in Presidents, Cabinets, Senators, Representatives, and all the array of the civil magistracy, nothing but men, fallible men, of like passions with myself. Every page of the history of the past has shown that men placed in such situations have been exceedingly prone to err and to do wickedly. I cannot, therefore, worship men in power. In so far as they are virtuous men I love them. In so far as they are able men I respect them. In so far as, with an honest and true heart, they labor to discharge the solemn duties to which they have been appointed, I honor and I venerate them. I will pay all due deference to the offices which they hold, and will bow with seemly respect to the men who hold them. These men are to me the representatives on earth of eternal justice and unsullied truth; and may my arm fall palsied from my shoulder-blade when I refuse to raise it in token of respect to him who is called of God to minister under so solemn a responsibility.

But all this veneration is due, not to the man, but to the magistrate, and it is due to him therefore, only so long as he con-

fines himself to the duties of his office, and discharges them with pure and patriotic intentions. I have a right to inquire whether his actions in his office conform to the principles of justice. He must claim for himself no immunity from scrutiny on account of the dignity of his station. If he use the power committed to him for any other purpose than that for which it was committed; if he prostitute his official influence to pander to the wishes of a political party; if he sacrifice the gravest interests of his country for the sake of securing to himself the emoluments of office; if he trample the national honor in the dust in order to minister to the grasping selfishness of a contemptible clique, — that moment every vestige of his sacredness is gone forever. He stands before me like Samson from the lap of Delilah. Shake himself as he may, it matters not to me, his strength is departed from him. But is this all? No, nor half; not only is his official sacredness departed, he has become to me the most odious of despicable men. He has sacrificed his country to his lusts. He has bartered away the well being of millions for food to nourish his vices. Whether in office or out of it, whether powerful or powerless, I can look upon him henceforth with no other feelings than those of pity and disgust.

But this may become a yet more practical matter. The magistrate may not only do wrong himself, but he may command me to do wrong. How shall I regard this command? I will regard it as I do any other command to do wrong, I will not obey it. I will look the magistracy calmly and respectfully in the face, and declare to it that in this matter I owe it no allegiance. I will have nothing to do with its wrong-doing. I will separate myself as far as possible from the act and its consequences, whether they be prosperous or adverse. It is wickedness; it has the curse of God inwrought into it, and I will have nothing to do with it. From the beginning to the end I will eschew it and the rewards that it offers. The magistracy may punish me; I cannot help that. I will not resist, but I will not do wrong, nor will I be a party to wrong, let the magistracy or aught else command me.

In saying this I hope that I arrogate to myself nothing in

the least peculiar. I am only in the plainest and simplest manner stating the rights and obligations of an intelligent moral being, accountable to God for his actions, and bound to reverence his Creator above all else in the universe. Created under such a responsibility, can I transfer the allegiance which I owe to God, to legislative assemblies, to political caucuses, to mass meetings, to packed or unpacked conventions representing or pretending to represent the assumed omnipotence of public opinion. My whole moral nature with loathing forbids it. I could not do it without feeling that I had become a despicable slave. I could not do it without knowing that I had exchanged the glorious and incorruptible God for an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. My fellow-citizens must not ask this of me; I will surrender for my country, my possessions, my labor, my life, but I will not sacrifice my integrity; and that is unworthy of being the country of a good man which shall ask it.

But here it seems proper that I illustrate more clearly the nature of that limit, beyond which the Christian obligation of obedience to the magistrate ceases. I proceed to offer a few suggestions on this part of our subject.

I have said that the great end for which civil society is established, and the magistracy appointed is, to secure to man the enjoyment of those rights with which he was endowed by his Creator. If society or the magistracy interfere with those rights, it is tyranny. If its acts transcend the limits of the authority committed to it, it is guilty of usurpation. In neither of these cases does the Gospel of Jesus Christ command us to render to it obedience.

The civil magistrate has frequently persecuted men even unto death for believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here he not only does not secure the enjoyment of an inalienable right, he goes farther and actually prohibits it. He demands of the conscience that it bow down to him rather than to its Maker. I need not repeat here the precepts of Christ which I have already quoted in reference to this subject. You all know that

we are commanded under such circumstances, on the peril of our souls, to pay no respect to the precepts of the magistracy. Fear not, saith our Lord, those that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Here then is a plain case, in which the magistrate, by inhibiting instead of securing the rights conferred on man by his Creator, has forfeited his claim to obedience; I do not say to *all* obedience, but to obedience *in just so far* as his commands interfere with the rights of man or the commandments of God.

The magistrate may also forfeit his claim to obedience by usurpation, that is, by employing his official power for other purposes than those for which it was committed to him. One of the most common instances of this form of wrong is found in the case of war. To this case let us direct our attention.

I have already remarked that the supreme power is conferred on the magistracy for the purpose of securing to every individual the rights conferred on him by the Creator. I have also said that in the exercise of this power the magistracy may defend the individual against wrong, whether it be offered by its own citizens or by strangers. It may, consistently with this principle, use force in order to extend its protection, if it can accomplish its purpose by no other means. But while all this is admitted we are carefully to observe the limitations with which this admission is guarded.

The object for which this power is conferred is, to secure to the citizen the enjoyment of his rights. Hence, *for no other object* can the resort to force, on Christian principles, be justified. The only persons whom this object regards are the *evil-doers themselves;* hence, against no others can force be directed. The object being the protection of rights, as *soon as this object is accomplished the reason for the employment of force ceases.* Such are, I think, the limits within which the employment of force by a government is, by the Christian religion and the principles of civil society, manifestly restricted.

Thus, suppose that a company of men should land upon our shores, for the purpose of destroying our property or pillaging our houses, or murdering our brethren. We and our fellow-

citizens have mutually promised to protect each other in the enjoyment of our rights. We are therefore bound to protect them. We may rightfully unite together, and, if it be necessary, repel the wrong-doers by force of arms. But, in this case, our object recognizes no other persons than the wrong-doers themselves. Their wives, their children, their innocent fellow-citizens, have done us no harm, and we have no authority to inflict injury upon them. If it be said that in perpetrating wrong they only obey the commands of their government, I reply they are moral and accountable men and have no right to obey a wicked command. All that is necessary in order to protect our rights is to repel the invader; and hence our object allows us to employ force to no greater extent than is demanded for the accomplishment of this object.

Again, as soon as our object is accomplished, and our rights are no longer endangered, all reason for contention ceases. We wish the wrong-doer no harm. We have no desire of vengeance to gratify. Our object is not to harm him, but only to protect ourselves. He is still our brother, though he has intended evil against us. This danger being now averted, we will again treat him as a brother and overcome evil by good. We will turn his enmity to friendship, and thus all strife between us must by necessity forever cease.

Again, it is, I think, evident that our rights are of very different degrees of importance, and therefore justify very dissimilar efforts to enforce them. The right to life and liberty is very unlike our right to property. The invasion of the one would authorize us to use means of redress, which could not be authorized by the invasion of the other. I may have the right to repel a murderer at the risk of his life, but this by no means would justify me in slaying a man, because he owed me a dollar, or entering his house by force of arms and seizing upon his property at the risk of the destruction of his family. We are reasonable, accountable and sinful men. It becomes us, who owe a thousand talents, not to press too eagerly the payment of a hundred pence. There is, in our circumstances, much that persuades to forbearance and charity, both as in-

dividuals and as members of a community. It is surely better to suffer loss than to reclaim our property at the sacrifice of that which is of infinitely higher value. This principle of conduct must certainly approve itself to every virtuous man.

Were this principle universally adopted, wars would very soon cease altogether. National force would never be employed except for the sake of protecting the citizen from injury. In no greater degree than was necessary for the accomplishment of this object would force be employed. No one but the wrong-doer would suffer, and as soon as his wrong-doing terminated, the employment of force would cease. These principles of action restrict the infliction of pain within the smallest possible limits, and thus they are in harmony with the attributes of a just and all-merciful God.

But, in granting this, do we admit the innocence of war, as it is at present carried on between nations. The two conceptions scarcely resemble each other in any single respect, except that in both cases, physical force is employed. The sheriff who arrests a criminal, and the highwayman who robs a traveller, both employ physical force to accomplish their object, yet we should hardly designate their acts by the same term. The one is a righteous and the other an unrighteous employment of force, and to concede the necessity of one, is by no means to admit the rectitude of the other. A declaration of war not only authorizes us to repel an *invader*, but it abolishes all the relations of peace between *two whole nations*, and substitutes in their place the relations of enmity unto death. It henceforth becomes the duty of our national force to destroy the lives and the property of our brethren whom we declare to be our enemies, to any extent that the prosecution of the war may render expedient. The more universal the slaughter, and the more terrific the destruction of property, the greater is the glory which we ascribe to the transaction. Innocent and guilty, combatants, and non-combatants, men, women and children are mingled in one common calamity, and our most gratifying success is that, in which, with the smallest loss to ourselves, we inflict the greatest misery upon our brethren. Can the right of self-protection any more than the precepts

of the Gospel of Jesus Christ ever justify atrocities such as these.

But this is only a part. The very declaration of war exposes us to all the calamities which we would inflict upon others. For this result we ourselves must be prepared. Every individual becomes in effect a soldier, liable at any moment to be led into battle. Military law supersedes all other law, whenever they come into collision. We in fact become parties in a war, and we must suffer the evils of the condition which we have chosen. We desire to inflict misery to the greatest extent upon our enemy, and we must prepare ourselves to receive at his hands whatever misery he can inflict upon us. Can any one believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, and not perceive that all this must be atrocious wickedness.

To illustrate this subject, let us suppose a case, which is not by any means without a parallel. A few months since, and we were at peace with all the world. We wished evil to none of our brethren of the human race, and none of them wished evil to us. Our property, wherever it might wander for the purposes of commerce, was everywhere protected by the arm of peaceful and universal law. On the other hand, the property and the lives of all our brethren of the human race were as safe under the guardianship of our constitution as under that of their own. Every good citizen felt it to be a point of honor to respect the rights of his neighbor, though he were separated from us by the diameter of the globe.

Suppose now, that war were declared by this nation against Great Britain, and all these conditions would be, by a single word, reversed. The property of both parties ceases to be under the protection of international law. Each nation sweeps the ocean with its fleets, and each confiscates, and destroys by hundreds of millions the property of the other. We exult in the misery which we inflict upon our correspondents, our friends, our relatives, and derive pleasure from the perpetration of indiscriminate slaughter. We send fleets and armies to devastate their coasts. We subject Liverpool to bombardment, and destroy its unoffending inhabitants by thousands; we advance to Manchester, and put to the sword every citizen who

defends his home from our ravages, and prosecute the work of destruction until resistance ceases, or we ourselves are overpowered. The greater our skill in the work of desolation, and the greater the number of human beings whom we can slaughter, the greater is our glory; and at every report of wholesale murder, there arises from a hundred cities the peal of national exultation. But the work of death is not confined to one of the parties. The forces of Great Britain are landed at Boston. That beautiful city is reduced to a heap of ruins. Young and old, innocent and guilty, parents and children, are involved in one common desolation. An army, flushed with conquest and maddened by resistance, pursues its course to New York, and there, on a larger scale, a similar scene is enacted. Shells and shot do the work of death, until resistance ceases and the city is surrendered up to the lusts of a brutal soldiery. And as the army moves in its gigantic force over our country, sweeping before it our flying and terrified people, destroying in its course whatever could be used for the purposes of defence, and consigning to instant death every man who defends himself or his property from aggression, each successive slaughter is chronicled by Englishmen as a victory; the leaders in this desolation are crowned with honors, and the cities in Great Britain blaze with illumination as they hear that tens of thousands of us their brethren are slain, that our hearths are steeped in blood, that our wives are widows, and our children fatherless.

Were the calamities which nations inflict upon each other in war to result from the agency of Divine Providence, what would be the feelings with which we should contemplate them. Suppose that an earthquake should work the destruction which we accomplish by a bombardment; that a tempest should sink our merchant ships, instead of a hostile fleet; that a hurricane instead of an army should sweep over the land, scattering desolation in its path and covering field after field with the thousands of the slain, what would be the moral sentiments with which we should contemplate such a succession of disasters? The whole land would stand aghast at this strange work of the Almighty. The infidel would construct from it an argument

to prove that a just Being could never have involved the innocent and the guilty in so frightful a common calamity; and the ministers of religion would be called upon Sabbath after Sabbath, to silence the rebellion of the human heart, "to assert eternal providence and justify the ways of God to man." And can anything be more atrocious than for us to work out a destruction so universal and so indiscriminate that natural conscience is staggered while she allows that the Eternal has the authority to inflict it? Can the right of self-defence ever justify atrocity such as this? Did we ever concede to Government the right to perpetrate so measureless a crime? It is in vain to say that, in giving to the magistracy the power to protect our citizens, all this power is also surrendered. That power was granted for a *given purpose*, and *for no other*, and it was limited within correspondent restrictions. The magistrate is clothed with the power of life and death, so that he may defend us against injury from each other; but this by no means confers upon him the right to cut us off at his pleasure by indiscriminate slaughter. He is authorized to use the national force, in order to defend us from external injury; but this confers upon him no authority to use that force for the purpose of conquest. The guilt of such an abuse of power is enormous, when war is provoked by the infliction of aggravated injury; but how greatly is this guilt increased when it is waged for insufficient cause, and yet more in the perpetration of atrocious wrong.

War has nevertheless been frequently carried on for the purpose of extending religious sentiments or political institutions. Wars for the sake of what is called religion, have in former times been frequent. Of late, millions of men have been slain in the contest between monarchy and republicanism. Such was the character of the wars of the French Revolution. Still later it has been urged that a war may be waged by one nation upon another in order to enlarge the area of freedom, and it has also been pleaded that freedom may most successfully be extended, by enlarging the domain of slavery.

It is obvious that every one of these reasons carries the mark of reprobation deeply branded upon its front. We have no right to interfere either by force or by intrigue with the religious

sentiments or political institutions of another nation. If we possess this right, every other nation possesses, and may exercise it as freely as ourselves. The result of such an admission would be to declare the innocence of universal war, and to assert the right of murdering any man who does not think as we do. I ask, is not this something very different from the right of self-defence?

Again, wars are sometimes waged for the sake of conquest. The soil of a neighboring nation is rich, or her harbors are commodious, and our power may be increased by adding them to our possessions. If we are the stronger party we can generally find pretexts to cover our all-grasping covetousness; and if all other reasons fail, we may always plead our irresistible destiny, and thus cast the blame of our wickedness upon the perfections of the Most High. But can such a transaction, though it could be perfected without bloodshed, be designated by any other name than robbery, and is there any more predestination about robbery than about any other crime? Does our *desire* for our neighbor's possessions give us any *right* to our neighbor's possessions? If desire confer right, it confers it upon all nations, and to admit this would be to admit the right of universal destruction. What shall we say, then, when this iniquitous passion for territory is gratified at the expense of indiscriminate slaughter? Can we conceive of a more diabolical wickedness, than a war waged in the cause of national robbery?

But I go farther, I ask, was the power of waging such a war, and for such purposes ever intended to be conferred upon a government? *Can* it ever be conferred? Can man under any circumstances authorize his brother to do wickedness? Can any man offer the authority of his fellow-man in justification of wrong-doing? But I ask again, *was* such authority ever given? I know that people have frequently conferred upon governments the power to declare and to carry on war. But did a people ever confer on a government the authority to carry on a war for the purpose of extending religious belief, or of establishing political institutions, or of increasing territorial dominion? Have we ever conferred this power upon our gov-

ernment? If, when our constitution was framed, this power had been asked for, would it ever have been granted? To these questions I apprehend but one answer can be returned by any thoughtful man.

I think, then, it must be evident that the right of self-defence in no manner involves the right to wage war as it is commonly waged between nations. The objects pursued in the two cases are entirely unlike, and the means of attaining them are widely dissimilar. For the accomplishment of one object, authority may be granted, but it cannot rightfully be granted for the accomplishment of the other. The well-being of society may require that in the one case this power be conferred upon the magistrate, while to concede it in the other, would be to consign the race of man to universal and interminable war. The principles of the Gospel may permit us to defend our fellow-citizens from injury, but we cannot inflict injury upon others without bringing down upon ourselves the judgments of a God who judges righteously.

In the previous discourse I endeavored to illustrate the object for which civil government was established, and to enforce the duty of cheerful obedience to it so long as its action was limited to the accomplishment of its legitimate object. In the present discourse I have attempted to show that a government may use unlawfully the power with which it is entrusted, that it may assume a power which neither social principles nor the written constitution ever conceded to it, and that it may, in doing this, also commit an act of atrocious wickedness. The question then arises, What is the course of conduct which the precepts of Jesus Christ prescribe for the citizen? To this part of the subject I propose to direct your attention in the following discourse.

SERMON III.

MATTHEW XXII. 21.

RENDER THEREFORE UNTO CESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CESAR'S, AND UNTO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD'S.

THE question to be considered in this discourse is this; What is the duty of a Christian citizen, when he believes that the government of his country is engaged in the perpetration of wickedness?

I suppose that I need not here refer to the fact that a disciple of Christ acknowledges the law of God to be of infinitely higher authority than the command of man. And when I say man, I use the term generically. I do not mean a single man, but man under what forms of combination soever he may be associated. Ecclesiastical societies, civil societies, political parties, combinations for the purpose of amassing wealth or consolidating power, utter nothing but the voice of man, weak, selfish, depraved and erring man, and man weaker, more selfish, more depraved and more liable to err, in consequence of the combination which blends the individuals too frequently into one soulless and unprincipled mass. It has been said, with too much practical truth, that corporate bodies have no conscience. Judge ye, then, how debasing must be the idolatry which obeys the commands of such an association, in defiance of the commands of God our Father Almighty.

In order to present this subject in a form as intelligible as possible, I will commence our discussion by stating a few

propositions which I suppose must lie at the foundation of a correct decision in regard to it.

1. It cannot, I think, be doubted that societies of all kinds are as liable to do wrong as the individuals of which they are composed. Merchants in partnership are as much exposed to the temptations of dishonesty as individual merchants. Incorporated companies, banks, joint stock companies, men associated for the promotion of any object whatever, have never, that I know of, been considered immaculate. The same is true of nations. We, at least, have always believed that Great Britain was guilty of grievous wrong in her treatment of us when we were her colonies. She must have been thus guilty unless our Declaration of Independence is a falsity. It is, I suppose, universally conceded, that France exhibited a scene of atrocious wickedness during the period of her revolution, and throughout all the wars which commenced with, and which succeeded it. I think that no one acquainted with the facts in the case can deny that our government has been guilty of grievous wrong in its treatment of many of the tribes of Indians on our western frontier, and especially in the removal by force of the Cherokee nation from their ancient homes and the burial-places of their fathers.

2. I think it must be admitted that every member of a society is morally responsible for the wrongs committed by that society, unless he has used all the innocent means in his power to prevent them. Unless he have done this he is a partaker in the wrong. It will constitute no valid excuse for him to plead that he was not the actual doer of the wrong, and that it was done by his agent. He who appoints an agent is, by every principle of law and of equity, responsible for his acts. Nor can we even plead in extenuation that we as members of the society took no active part in the appointment and direction of the agent. The wrong is done, and the wrong might have been prevented, by the exercise of precisely such power as has been placed in our hands. Unless we have exerted that power for the prevention of wrong, which others have exerted in causing it to be committed, we are, on every principle of right reason responsible for the act and are partakers of the guilt.

This is the only rule, so far as I know, by which we estimate moral responsibility in all cases of association. If several men are united in a copartnership, we hold every one of them responsible for the acts of the firm, not only legally, but, under the conditions which I have specified, morally also. If one partner commit no act of dishonesty with his own hands, yet if he be cognizant of the dishonest acts of his associates, if he allow them to use his capital and then share with them the gains of wickedness, he is manifestly as guilty as they. Although he never told his clerk to defraud, yet if he see his clerk defraud at the command of his partners, and never put a stop to the villany, is he not as thorough a sharper as any one of his companions?

Such are the judgments which we invariably form in respect to the acts of a private association. Precisely the same principles guide our judgments respecting the obligations of a political society. A people is always held responsible for the acts of its government, be the form of that government what it may. No nation has ever maintained this doctrine more strenuously than ourselves. We have demanded restitution for wrongs inflicted under the government of an usurper, or even under the temporary subjection of a nation to a foreign power. But if this be the law of national responsibility, it is manifest that it applies to us with greater stringency than to any other people on earth. We exercise, in its widest extent, the right to elect our own rulers. We elect them for short periods. We demand a full knowledge of all their public acts, and of the reasons which have led to all their decisions. We remove them whenever their acts displease us. We thus employ them as our agents. We claim to be principals, and we must by consequence assume all the responsibility of principals. We thus forever shut ourselves out from the plea that we are not answerable for the acts of our rulers. No American citizen can ever offer this plea unless he has employed his constitutional power to its full extent for the prevention of national wrong-doing.

Let us suppose, for instance, that the Legislature of a State borrows money for the purpose of constructing works of inter-

nal improvement. The question of effecting this loan was publicly discussed. It was believed to be a measure of great public utility. No citizen objected to it. The funds are received and appropriated, and the faith of the State is pledged for their redemption. The undertaking proves disastrous, or the loan is squandered by unfaithful agents. The enterprise becomes unpopular. The Legislature refuses to pay it, and the people sustain their refusal by declaring that they will not be taxed to redeem their bonds. Can there be a doubt that the citizen who suffers this wrong to be done, without uttering his solemn remonstrance, is a partaker in the guilt of the dishonesty? Can any man, under such circumstances, be innocent, unless he not only is willing to pay his portion of the debt, but also exert all the influence which he possesses to persuade his fellow-citizens to be of the same opinion? Nay even this is not enough. He cannot free himself from the stain of dishonesty until he has used all the constitutional means in his power to secure the election of those rulers who will redeem the solemn pledges of the State, and reassure the world that the national honor is inviolate.

3. It will, I presume, be admitted that the precepts of the Gospel in no case whatever allow the disciple of Christ to be voluntarily a partaker, directly or indirectly, in the commission of wrong. This principle is of universal application. It governs us under all circumstances in which we can possibly be placed. It matters not whether the wrong be intended by an individual or by a society, whether we are to gain or to lose by the transaction. Our decision can be swayed neither by the terrors of power, nor by the allurements of affection; neither by the frown of a tyrant nor the frenzy of a mob. The disciple of Christ can bow down before nothing but right. We must hate father and mother, houses and lands, yea and our own life also, for the sake of Christ. And Christ forewarns us that if we love him we must keep his commandments in preference to those of man, whether individual or social, and irrespective of the consequences which may follow from our obedience. "Fear not them," saith he, "that kill the body, and after that have nothing that they can do, but fear him

who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear him."

But even this is, in fact, the operation of nothing more than a generally admitted moral principle. If there be any distinction between virtue and vice, if guilt and innocence be not the mere figments of the nursery; if man be endowed with a conscience by which he is allied to God, and by the possession of which he is rendered accountable to him; if this life be a state of probation, and if every one of our actions here will continue to unfold its consequences after ages upon ages have rolled away; if the favor of God be infinitely the greatest blessing and his displeasure infinitely the direst curse of which the mind of creatures can conceive, then, surely, our moral obligations must take precedence of every other impulse, and we must do what we believe to be right not only in the face of danger but if need be in deliberate defiance of the power of the unanimous world.

From these remarks it must, I think, appear evident, that every member of a society is guilty of the wrong-doing of that society, unless he has employed all the innocent means in his power to prevent it; that the essential principles of the Christian religion forbid us to participate directly or indirectly in wrong-doing; that they oblige us to put forth all the innocent means in our power to prevent it or to arrest its progress; and if this last be impossible, they command us to withdraw from all participation in what we believe to be displeasing to God.

Of the truth of these principles I think there can be no doubt. If I mistake not, they commend themselves to the reason and conscience of every man as soon as they are presented. The only question that remains to be considered is this, in what manner do these principles limit our obedience to the civil magistrate? or, in other words, how may we render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and yet shun participation in the guilt of Cesar?

I inquire first, do the principles of the Gospel permit us to resist by force the wrong-doing of our government. This question may, I think, be easily answered by referring to the exposition previously given respecting the object of civil

society. Civil society is instituted for the purpose of securing to man the enjoyment of those rights with which he has been endowed by his Creator. So long as it discharges this its office, making all due allowance for human imperfection, and so long as this is its honest intention, we have no authority to resist it. When, on the contrary, it not only ceases to perform this its only office, but also employs its power in depriving us of those rights conferred upon us by our Creator, then, in the view of reason and religion, it ceases to be a government. Destitute of moral principle, it is nothing but *power without authority;* and we are justified in setting it aside and constructing *a government* in its place. For no other reason, so far as I perceive are we justified in resisting by force that which performs the functions of government. The magistracy may err, it may do wrong, it may in many respects treat me unjustly; it may treat foreign nations unjustly, but none of this, nor all of it together, justifies me in resisting it by force, so long as it accomplishes, or honestly intends to accomplish the purpose for which it was established. The government of Rome in the times of Christ and his Apostles, was exceedingly corrupt and oppressive, and yet we find not a syllable in the New Testament which would authorize a citizen to rebel against it, but very much that inculcates obedience to it in all things not forbidden by the commandments of God.

If then we are forbidden to resist the civil magistracy by force, in what manner may a Christian citizen innocently deliver himself from the guilt of wrong perpetrated by the government of his country? To this question let us endeavor to return an intelligible answer.

1. I presume it will be admitted that every man is bound to understand the nature of every question on which he gives an opinion; especially when that opinion must lead to a practical result. This is as true of questions of public as of those of private concernment. If it be true in general, it is much more definitely true in those cases where we utter our constitutional opinion in the act of suffrage. If this be true of other governments, how much more emphatically is it true of our own! We have chosen a form of government in which all power emanates from the individual citizen. We declare in the most

unambiguous manner, that the officers of government are our agents, in all respects responsible to us their principals. If we claim the enjoyment of this right, we must not shrink from the responsibility which it imposes upon us. Can anything be more obvious than this, that he who claims the right of directing the concerns of a community, is under a moral obligation to qualify himself for the discharge of the duty which he has voluntarily assumed ?

When men unite in the establishment of a government, they mutually promise, in all their relations with each other, to yield obedience to certain fundamental principles. The object of these principles is *to define and limit the power of the magistracy, and to prescribe the manner in which this power shall be exerted.* The enunciation of these principles forms what is called a constitution. This being once established, it binds all and it protects all. It is a solemn and mutual contract between every individual on the one part, and the whole community on the other part. Upon the faithful fulfilment of this contract, depends the freedom of every individual and the security of his rights, whether civil or religious. We can neither assume powers not conferred upon us by this instrument nor refuse to carry its provisions into practice, either ourselves or by our agents, without a violation of our solemn obligations. It matters not how overpowering the majority by whom the outrage is committed, nor how small the minority whose rights are infringed, nor how elevated the position of the functionary by whom the act is performed ; it is a crime of the deepest dye, and merits and should meet the sternest reprobation of every virtuous man. If, then, such be the responsibility assumed by every citizen of a free government, it surely becomes him to understand the provisions of that instrument by which this responsibility is created.

The same remarks apply essentially to those parts of the social compact by which our intercourse with foreign nations is regulated. We appoint public officers to conduct all our affairs with other countries. We prescribe the limits within which their power in this respect shall be exerted. We assert the right of directing our agents according to our own will, and hence we are responsible for their acts. This right we

must *exercise* unless we consent to become slaves rather than freemen. Should we allow our rulers to violate the rights of other nations, to involve us in wars according to their own will, not only should we be principals in the guilt of bloodshed, but, while we boast of the freedom of our institutions, we should in fact become the minions of a despot.

Secondly. Supposing a Christian citizen to have made himself acquainted with the principles of the constitution under which he lives, he is bound to apply these principles to the decision of every public measure on which he forms an opinion. The first question for him to ask in respect to every public act is this, Can this act be done without violation of the compact by which I and my fellow-citizens have promised to bind ourselves in our relations with each other? If the answer to this question be in the negative, no matter what may be the advantage to be secured, no matter how urgent may be the demands of a political party struggling for place, a Christian and an honest man must shrink back from the act with indignation. Or again; suppose that we find the power to have been committed to the magistrate, it by no means follows that his manner of using it is in accordance with the compact. It may have been committed to him for one purpose and he may use it for another. This is a violation of the contract, and against it we are bound to protect ourselves and our fellow-citizens. Take as an illustration the case of a declaration and prosecution of war. The authority to declare war is granted by us to our legislators. But for what purpose was this authority conferred? Plainly for the purpose of defending us from aggression, and protecting us from injury. Was authority ever given by this people to their rulers to prosecute a war for conquest, or for glory, or to extend slavery, or to restrict it? In the formation of our constitution, as I have said before, if such a power had been demanded would it ever have been conceded? Would not the concession of such a power have branded us at once as a nation of freebooters? In such ways as these, I suppose, we are to apply the principles of the constitution to the decision of every public act.

But this is not all. Suppose that the act be not in violation of the principles of the constitution, we may yet inquire whether

it be in violation of the principles of the gospel. Suppose a nation has given us cause of offence; a disciple of Christ must ask himself, Can I be a party to measures which seek for the redress of grievance by means of the slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent persons, and the destruction of hundreds of millions of treasure, treasure earned by the bone and sinew of my fellow-men, whether friends or enemies? Could I, in a matter of private grief, pursue my revenge in a similar manner? Every Christian, in the solitude of the closet, in the presence of his God, is bound to ask all these questions, and to answer them for himself. He must put far away from him the prejudice of sectional interests; he must close his ears to the mandates of a political party, and calmly and resolutely form his opinions in the sight of the omniscient God, and in the full conviction that the result to which he shall arrive will meet him again in the day when the secrets of men's hearts shall be revealed.

And now supposing, that after such a review, a Christian shall be convinced that the acts of his government are in violation of the compact from which all authority emanates, or at variance with the moral law which Christ has revealed to our race, what then shall he do? I answer, as a Christian, a citizen, and a freeman, he cannot be guiltless unless he put forth all his social and constitutional influence to prevent or to arrest it.

If it be asked by what means can this be done, the answer is at hand. Having formed his opinions in obedience to moral principle, let him freely and fearlessly *express them*. It is thus alone that a virtuous and independent public opinion can be formed. We are bound to do this in obedience to the dictates of humanity. He who possesses knowledge which he believes to be valuable to the community, is under obligation to divulge it. The command of our Lord has made this our duty, under the most imperative sanction. "What I have told you in darkness that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear that preach ye on the house-tops, and fear not those that kill the body." And, indeed, unless this be done, by what means shall truth and righteousness make progress in the world? The wicked labor without ceasing to extinguish moral light; and if

we, to whom its custody has been committed, hide it under a bushel, instead of placing it upon a candlestick, we betray the cause of truth, and by our silence declare our willingness that it be banished from the earth.

And here I may add, that, in a free government like our own, this manly avowal of our adherence to right, and our opposition to evil, would commonly render a resort to other measures comparatively needless. The good men among us — and under this term I mean to include all men of virtuous sentiments, whether they profess themselves the disciples of Christ or not — have it perfectly in their power, by the calm and decided expression of their moral convictions, to direct the destinies of this nation. There never has existed, and there never can exist, either an administration or a political party, that would dare to trifle with the *uttered* sentiments of the men of principle in the United States. Were such an act done but once, there would be small temptation to repeat the insult. If you ask me why it is, then, that public wrongs are so frequently done, and the doers of them held scathless, I answer, it is because those sentiments *are not uttered.* There exists among us a fear of avowing our *moral* sentiments upon political questions, which seems to me as servile as it is unaccountable. It envelopes society like a poisoned atmosphere. It is invisible and intangible, but every virtuous sentiment that breathes it grows torpid, loses consciousness, gasps feebly, and dies. To this result every man contributes who withholds the expression of his honest indignation on every occasion of public wrong-doing.

2. But the mere expression of our moral sentiments, by no means discharges us from the responsibility which rests upon us as Christian citizens. Our sentiments are worthless, not to say savoring of hypocrisy, unless they lead us to correspondent action. When we believe an act to be wrong, we have no more right to appoint a man to office, who, as we believe, will perform it, than we have to perform it ourselves. For such a man we cannot, with a good conscience, vote. By refusing to vote for such a man, we in part deliver ourselves from the guilt of wrong-doing. But we must go farther. We must not merely have no part in wrong-doing, we must see to it that wrong be not done. We must use all innocent constitutional

means to secure the doing of right. We must choose men to represent us whom we believe to be governed by moral principle, who will act in the fear of God, and who will love right and justice and mercy better than personal aggrandizement or political power. By this I do not mean that we should limit our selection to any religious sect, or to the professors of any form of belief. Far from it. All that I claim is that we shall choose men who will represent the *moral*, as well as the *political* sentiments of this nation. A virtuous man has certainly a right to demand that his moral feelings be not outraged by the public agent whom he appoints. If we sternly enforce this demand, we ourselves shall be innocent, and the republic will be safe.

But suppose that our honest efforts thus put forth are ineffectual, and a course of public wrong-doing has been actually commenced; what is then our duty?

I reply; the fact that our country has commenced a course of wrong-doing in no manner whatever alters the moral character of the action. The greater the number of persons combined to perpetrate injury, the greater is the wickedness and the more interminable the mischief. A nation seems a vast and magnificent conception to us the children of yesterday, but it is otherwise with "Him who sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are like grasshoppers; who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and before whom all nations are counted as less than nothing and vanity." What then is the will of a nation in comparison with the command of Almighty God, and what can be the measure of that impiety which exclaims, "our country, whether right or wrong," that is, our country in defiance of the Eternal One himself.

Every virtuous man must shrink back with trembling from so glaring an impiety, and look with abhorrence upon a cause which requires such sentiments to sustain it. If his country has done or is doing wrong, he must boldly and fearlessly express his opinion of the transaction. He must, as I have before remarked, use all the constitutional power which he possesses, in order to bring the public wickedness to a close. Were the good men of this nation thus to unite, national wickedness among us would be of very limited duration.

But this is not all. While the wrong-doing is in progress we are bound to have no farther participation in it than our social condition renders indispensable. The punishment which God inflicts upon the nation for its crime, we must bear in common with our fellow-citizens. This we cannot avoid, and we must bear it manfully and uncomplainingly. But we can go no farther. We may have no share in the gains of iniquity. A good man can arm no privateers against his brethren of another nation because his government has styled them his enemies. He can loan no money to government, no matter how advantageous the terms of investment, in order to carry on an iniquitous war. He can undertake no contracts by which he may become rich out of the wages of unrighteousness. He may not say, if I do not reap these gains other men will reap them. They are the gains of wickedness, and let the wicked have them. If a good man believe that moral principle is better than gold, this is precisely the occasion on which he is called upon to show his faith by his works. The only question for a conscientious man to ask is this, Is the public act wrong in the sight of God? If it be wrong he must have nothing to do with it, and he can no more innocently aid it with his capital than with his personal service.

But it may be said, that a course of conduct like this would destroy all political organizations and render nugatory the designations in which we have for so very long prided ourselves. If this be all the mischief that is done, the republic, I think, may very patiently endure it. The voice of history has surely spoken in vain if it has not taught us that political parties have ever been combinations for the purposes of personal aggrandizement, advocating or denouncing whatever political principles would best subserve the selfish objects, which alone gave efficiency to their organization.* And besides this, if a disci-

* "The history of English party is as certainly that of a few great men and powerful families on the one hand, contending for place and power, with a few others on the opposite quarter, as it is the history of the Plantagenets, the Tudors, and the Stuarts. There is nothing more untrue than to represent *principle* at the bottom of it; *interest is at the bottom*, and the opposition of principle is subservient to the opposition of interest. Accordingly, the result has been, that unless perhaps when a dynasty was changed, as in 1688, and for some time afterwards, and excepting in questions connected with this

ple of Christ has learned to value his political party more highly than he does truth and justice and mercy, it is surely time that his connection with it were broken off. Let him learn to surrender party for moral principle, and stand forth, though he stand alone, the friend of righteousness. Let all good men do this, and they will form a party by themselves — a party, acting in the fear of God, and sustained by the arm of omnipotence. Then would our nation present the glorious spectacle of a people governed by the laws of God, obeying above all things the rule of eternal rectitude; then God would be our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; God would be in the midst of us, and we should not be moved; God would help us, and that right early.

To all this I know it will be answered, there are never more than two political parties, and though with neither can a good man harmonize, yet he must unite with either the one or the other, lest his influence be altogether thrown away. He must therefore become a party to much that is wrong, that thus he may accomplish a probable good. To this objection our reply must be brief. It declares it to be our duty to do wrong for the sake of attaining a purpose, or, in the words of the Apostle, "to do evil that good may come." This is its simple and obvious meaning, and we leave it to the condemnation of the Apostle. But besides all this, when we urge such a plea we seem to forget that there is a power in truth and rectitude, which wise men would be wiser, did they duly appreciate. Let the moral principle of this country only find an utterance, and party organizations would quail before its rebuke. How often have we seen a combination, insignificant in point of

change, *the very same conduct was held and the same principles professed by both parties when in office, and, by both in opposition.* The Whig, when not in office, was for retrenchment and for peace; transplant him into office, and he cared little for either. Bills of coercion, suspensions of the constitution, were his abhorrence when propounded by Tories; in place, he propounded them himself. Acts of indemnity and of attainder were the favorites of the Tory in power; the Tory in opposition was the enemy of both. The gravest charge ever brought by a Whig against his adversary was the personal proscription of an exalted individual to please a king; the worst charge that the Tory can level against the Whig is the support of a proscription still less justifiable, to please a viceroy."—*Lord Brougham on the Effects of Party.*

numbers, breaking loose from the trammels of party, and uniting in the support of a *single* principle, hold the balance of power between contending parties, and wield the destinies of either at its will. Let virtuous men then unite on the ground of *universal moral principle*, and the tyranny of party will be crushed. Were the virtuous men of this country to carry their moral sentiments into practice, and act alone rather than participate in the doing of wrong, all parties would from necessity submit to their authority, and the acts of the nation would become a true exponent of the moral character of our people.

And unless we do this, it is both folly and injustice to complain of the magistracy which we have set over us. We have no reason to expect in a legislator a higher degree of virtue than we possess ourselves. It is ungenerous to blame him for being a selfish partisan when we ourselves have set him the example. It is unreasonable to expect him to sacrifice office, emolument and influence for principle, while we dare not act from principle when we have none of these to lose. It is shameful to ask him to forsake his party for right, when we ourselves, if he obeyed our wishes, would be the first to abandon him. If we expect moral independence in our representatives, we must show them that we possess it ourselves. If we ask them to peril their political influence for right, we must at least show them that the moral principle of their constituents will sustain them in well-doing.

We see then, that this whole discussion tends to one very simple practical conclusion. A virtuous man is bound to carry his principles into practice in all the relations of life. He can no more do wrong in company than alone, and be guiltless. If he be a true man, he must love right and justice and mercy, better than political party, or personal popularity. If he fear God, he must obey God rather than man, and this fear must govern his conduct universally. In this matter every man must begin not with his neighbor, but himself, and if he wish our country to be reformed, let him begin the work immediately. Let us all then lay these things solemnly to heart, and may God grant us grace to carry them into practice.

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